

HELP AND HOPE

FOR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF ALCOHOLICS



I TRIED
TO BE
PERFECT

THE DRINKING
WAS A HORRIBLE
SECRET

AL-ANON
IS ALL ABOUT
CHANGE

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AL-ANON FACES ALCOHOLISM 2019

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from the cover



I Tried To Be Perfect

By Carolyn K., Ohio



Al-Anon Is All About Change

*By Eugene (J.R.) Lombardo,
LCSW Counseling and Psychotherapy
White Plains, N.Y.*



The Drinking Was a Horrible Secret

By Tammie McL., Michigan

Dear Reader,

Walking through the doors of my first Al-Anon meeting, I was concerned I was different and wouldn't belong. I didn't have a spouse or boyfriend who was drinking. I was not trying to cure someone else's alcoholism. I knew I was causing my problems, but I had lost all hope of finding a solution.

What I didn't know then, but gratefully understand today, is that I grew up in the family disease of alcoholism. Since alcohol had always been part of everyday life, I did not suspect it as the problem. The alcoholism in my family background, however, had provided the foundation for negative patterns of behavior in my life, which haunted me until I came to Al-Anon Family Groups.

It was my counsellor's recommendation that I "find support from people other than those involved in my immediate drama" that led me to Al-Anon. She felt that I had grown significantly through counselling but that I needed a support system to sustain my efforts between sessions. So, I researched and found the questions on the Al-Anon website to which I answered mostly, "Yes." But, still I was concerned I wouldn't belong.

What I discovered at that first meeting in Canada and throughout my later experience at meetings around the globe is that Al-Anon Family Groups is a diverse fellowship of people seeking help and support in living with another's alcoholism. Groups consist of grandparents, parents, spouses and siblings, along with others who have been affected by the disease. We all share the message of hope that comes from practicing the Twelve Steps and being of service to others.

Today my life is full of hope. My commitment to using the principles of the program has enabled me to have a vibrant career, which this year led me to become the Executive Director of Al-Anon Family Groups. Al-Anon tools also helped me improve my parenting skills. The program is designed to help with all aspects of life.

If you are wondering whether you belong in Al-Anon, why not come to a meeting—be it in your local community, online or by phone? Al-Anon meetings occur globally and 24/7 through electronic formats—and they are all free. Members will welcome you and encourage you to decide for yourself whether the program can help you with your circumstances.

Most sincerely,

Vali F.

Executive Director, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

HOW DO I KNOW IF AL-ANON COULD HELP ME?

Heavy drinkers commonly say that their drinking is not as serious a problem as some people think. People who are close to them also tend to minimize how seriously the drinker's alcohol abuse has affected *them*. They are trying to keep things as normal as possible under conditions that are sometimes unbearable.

These questions can help you decide if you could benefit from visiting an Al-Anon meeting.

1. Do you worry about how much someone else drinks?
2. Do you have money problems because of someone else's drinking?
3. Do you tell lies to cover up for someone else's drinking?
4. Do you feel that if the drinker cared about you, he or she would stop drinking to please you?
5. Are plans frequently upset or canceled because of the drinker?
6. Do you make threats, such as, "If you don't stop drinking, I'll leave you"?
7. Are you afraid to upset someone for fear it will set off a drinking bout?
8. Have you been hurt or embarrassed by a drinker's behavior?
9. Do you search for hidden alcohol?
10. Have you refused social invitations out of fear or anxiety?
11. Do you feel like a failure because you can't control someone else's drinking?
12. Do you think that if the drinker stopped drinking, your other problems would be solved?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, Al-Anon or Alateen may be helpful.



I no longer felt like I was alone, trying to set things right in my family all by myself.

I Tried To Be Perfect

By Carolyn K., Ohio

I have always been a loner— independent and in control of my life. I raised two children alone and considered myself a successful mother. After all, my upbringing was so unpleasant that if I just did the opposite of my parents, I would do everything perfectly.

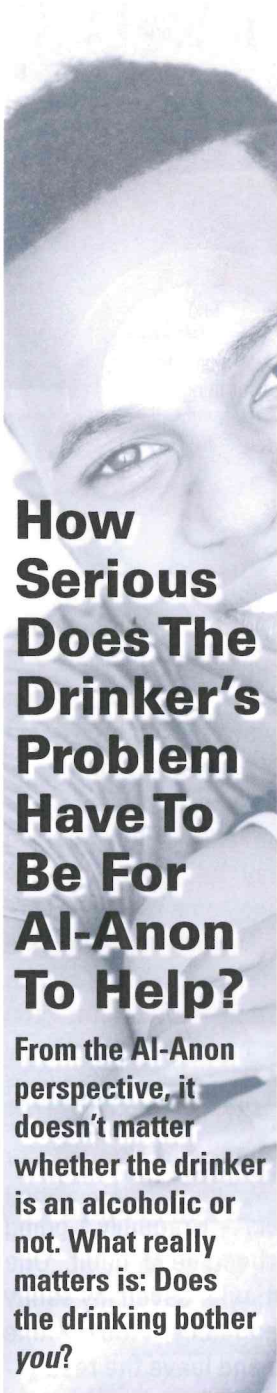
But something happened on my way to perfection. My daughter turned to alcohol at puberty to self-medicate for manic depression. As she moved into the difficult teenage years, I tried to cover up the disorder and chaos that was taking over our home. After all, from the outside, our family looked competent and successful.

Sharing my life story with others was out of the question. But, after seeing the progress of a relative in recovery, I reluctantly decided to

try Al-Anon. At the first meeting, I realized that my emotions were not unique. I heard experiences that paralleled my own—I no longer felt like I was alone, trying to set things right in my family all by myself.

At first, I worked Al-Anon's Twelve Steps with my head, but not my heart. It took me some time to realize that the key to serenity was patience and practice. I was so used to coping with chaos that serenity at first seemed a bit boring, but gradually it became a soothing lifestyle and it remains so today.

The most important slogan for me at that first meeting was "Keep Coming Back." Gradually, going to meetings became a habit. One slogan in particular saved my sanity and my daughter's, too—"Take what you like and leave the rest."



How Serious Does The Drinker's Problem Have To Be For Al-Anon To Help?

From the Al-Anon perspective, it doesn't matter whether the drinker is an alcoholic or not. What really matters is: Does the drinking bother *you*?

SOMEONE CLOSE TO ME HAS A DRUG PROBLEM

Al-Anon Family Groups have one focus: to help friends and families of alcoholics.

Al-Anon's most recent membership survey reported, however, that 40 percent of Al-Anon members *first* came to Al-Anon Family Groups because of a friend or relative who had a drug problem. The survey also showed that 85 percent of these members eventually came to realize that someone's drinking had also negatively affected their lives.



Lasting Effects...

Even if active alcoholism is not in your life now, sometimes a relationship with a problem drinker can have long-lasting effects. Al-Anon and Alateen members help each other to understand and unravel the effects of someone else's drinking and offer an opportunity for healing and growth.

I Always Come to a New Understanding

By Pat S., Missouri

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The first alcoholic in my life was my mother. When I was young, I never heard of A.A., Al-Anon, Alateen or alcohol rehabilitation. You went to school with a smile pasted on your face and never discussed what went on at home. My mother had her dear, sweet side and then she had her other side. My sister followed in her footsteps. I was lucky because I did not like the taste of alcohol and I surely did not like the effects it had on those around me.

I went to a family recovery program following my oldest daughter's stint in a rehabilitation center. She was successful and living proof that rehabilitation can and does work—we enrolled her when she was 16. The program I went to had a "fearless leader" who led every meeting and I quit going after a time.

My middle son decided to turn to drinking when he went through a painful divorce. I went to Al-Anon, and this time I stayed. My son met a lovely lady and when they married he ended his drinking—Thank God! But my membership in Al-Anon did not end.

My sister, who took after our mother, is in a nursing home—although she is younger than I am. It is very sad. I continue coming to Al-Anon to deal with life on life's terms. I did not cause their alcoholism; I cannot control their alcoholism and I can't cure it.

The meeting I attended earlier today had the Serenity Prayer as its topic. God, grant me the serenity. It is very important in Al-Anon that whenever we say, "God," this refers to the God of my understanding. It does not matter if I am Christian, Jewish, Muslim or none of the above. This idea of God is about my Higher Power. Chances are good that no two people on the face of the earth have the exact same understanding of their Higher Power.

I "Keep Coming Back" to Al-Anon, because I will never know it all. I learn something new at every meeting. I may have heard some of the same words before, but I always come to a new understanding. My hope is that my story helps at least one person to make their first trip through the open and welcoming doors of Al-Anon.

A Wave of Relief

By Nancy Duff-Boehm, Ph.D. • Clinical Psychologist • Boehm Psych Services
North Olmsted, Ohio

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During my 32 years in practice, I have counseled many individuals and families who struggle with a loved one's alcoholism or addiction. I have welcomed many professional referrals who do not think they need a Twelve Step program. My approach is to be accepting and persistent about the recommendation that I give them to go to Al-Anon.

When someone has dealt with addiction in their family for years, and the professional they go to for relief suggests they take more time and energy to talk and think about themselves, the response is usually, "Are you kidding? I've already given up all the time and energy I can spare for this problem, and that's why I'm here! I just want you to tell me how I can fix it!"

I can appreciate their point of view. It took me decades to go from knowing about Al-Anon to attending an Al-Anon meeting. It does not help to point out that the methods family members have used so far have done little to help the situation and may even have perpetuated the problem.

A family member already feels guilty enough, believing that he or she may have caused the problem. This person needs empathy and support, a haven from the storm of blame and guilt. It takes tact and delicate timing to impart the information that there are alternative, self-protective ways to respond to an addict or alcoholic's behavior. Responses that protect oneself are also the healthiest responses for the addicted person. When this insight penetrates, there is often such a wave of relief that the family member becomes open, even eager, to find out more about what Al-Anon has to offer.

Many times, the experience of the first Al-Anon meeting is all it takes for a person to understand the richness of the program and the depth of relief that Al-Anon can provide. At other times, the patient returns to my office reporting that all that happened was a bunch of whiners complained about their suffering or railed about the hurtful behavior of the addict or alcoholic. My response is in any Al-Anon meeting there may be newcomers who need to talk, but who do not yet have the feel of the program. The real challenge is to find someone who has a message that will help.



Responses
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person.

For someone with the problem of addiction in a loved one, there is a far better chance of finding that helpful message in an Al-Anon meeting than any place else on earth. It typically takes six sessions to understand the wisdom in the principles of Al-Anon, beyond the personalities of those who are speaking. Most people, after experiencing six meetings, will clear their schedule to attend more.

Al-Anon is a program of attraction, not promotion, but sometimes people need to observe something several times before they can recognize its value.



I'm Glad Our Doctor Suggested Al-Anon

By Liz, Ontario

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When I first walked through the doors of Al-Anon, I wasn't sure why I was there. Members greeted me with friendly hellos and hugs, if I wanted a hug. I didn't understand the problems in our home but learned about alcoholism at my subsequent meetings and by reading on my own.

I blamed the alcoholic in my life for the unmanageability in our home, but learned in Al-Anon, "The family situation is bound to improve as we apply the Al-Anon ideas," and it has!

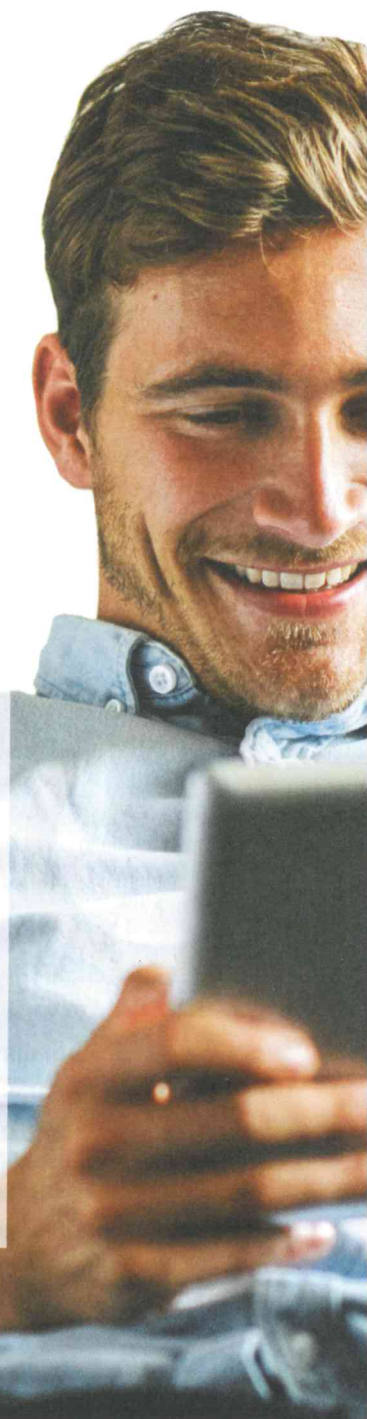
Feeling ashamed of my home life, I isolated from family and friends. I met members at meetings who understood what I was going through, and I started feeling more comfortable the more meetings I attended.

I'm really glad our doctor suggested I attend Al-Anon. Attending my first meeting was one of the best decisions I made for me! I'm grateful Al-Anon has helped me with my serenity, and in so many ways. I'll keep coming back!

Find Al-Anon Family Groups on Facebook by searching for Al-Anon WSO (English), Los Grupos de Familia Al-Anon OSM (Spanish) and Les Groupes Familiaux Al-Anon BSM (French).

What visitors to the Al-Anon Family Groups official Facebook page have to say:

- Peace is what I feel every time I walk out of my meeting.
- Al-Anon has brought sanity to my life. I appreciate the idea of being able to learn from others who have and are dealing with alcoholism in their lives.
- Before Al-Anon, I thought I was alone, but I discovered that I only had to be alone if I chose to be.
- What I love about Al-Anon is that no one tells me what to do. I have the freedom to choose, learn from my mistakes and appreciate my strengths.
- Al-Anon was the answer to my problem and my problem was me.
- I have learned so much from Al-Anon. I apply the principles in all aspects of my life, not just when dealing with the drinkers in my life.



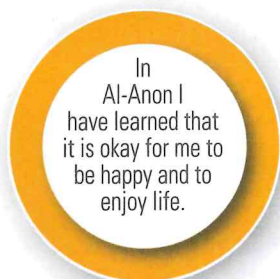
My Son Struggled with Alcohol and Drugs

By Ruth Ann B., Oklahoma

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My first Al-Anon meeting opened my eyes and I saw there were others who struggled as I did. Somehow there was something different about these people in Al-Anon. They seemed at peace as they shared their personal stories with each other. I was drawn to their kindness and sincerity and wanted what they had.

My son had been struggling with alcohol and drugs. I felt heartbroken and did the only thing that I thought would help. I tried to fix him, but things only got worse. I neglected everyone, including myself, and could only focus on him. My life lost all its joy. In fact, life became something that I had to endure.



In
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it is okay for me to
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enjoy life.

I started to attend Al-Anon meetings regularly. I didn't know what I learned was preparing me to deal with some of the most painful experiences of my life. Because of Al-Anon, I became better-equipped to deal with the hardships that were coming.

Thanks to Al-Anon, I found healthy friends I could reach out to in times of struggle. I found literature to keep me focused and give me peace and reassurance. I also developed a sense of hope that things would improve.

Things have improved with my son, too. Our relationship is healthier. As I look back, I know that the things I learned in Al-Anon are vitally important in our lives. Before, I could never let my son live his own life, even though I couldn't win his battles for him. For him to be free, he had to want this for himself—when he was ready.

Thanks to Al-Anon, now I can go to meetings and not only receive help, but also give help and share my hope with others. Most of all, in Al-Anon I have learned that it is okay for me to be happy and to enjoy life.

What Kind of “Answers” Will I Find in Al-Anon?

Al-Anon members find support and understanding as they share their experiences in applying the Al-Anon principles to their lives.

This peer-to-peer exchange helps them discover new choices and new ways of thinking about how to handle the effects of alcohol abuse. They do not give each other advice or specific direction.

There Are No Dues or Fees

Members make voluntary contributions because each group is self-supporting and declines outside contributions. Most groups pass a basket at each meeting to help cover routine costs, such as renting the meeting room, supporting Al-Anon services and buying literature.

When Someone Close to You Drinks Too Much...

Sometimes the problem drinker is a spouse or partner. Sometimes parents are concerned about their son's or daughter's drinking. Sometimes the drinker is (or was) a parent, another relative, a co-worker or a friend.

Anonymity

In keeping with Al-Anon's tradition of anonymity, members do not use their full names. No one whose picture appears in this publication is a member of Al-Anon or Alateen.

No Appointments Are Necessary

Anyone concerned about someone else's drinking is welcome to attend any meeting. Reservations or referrals are not required.

How To find an Al-Anon or Alateen Meeting

Visit al-anon.org or call 1-888-4ALANON (1-888-425-2666) for local and virtual meeting information.

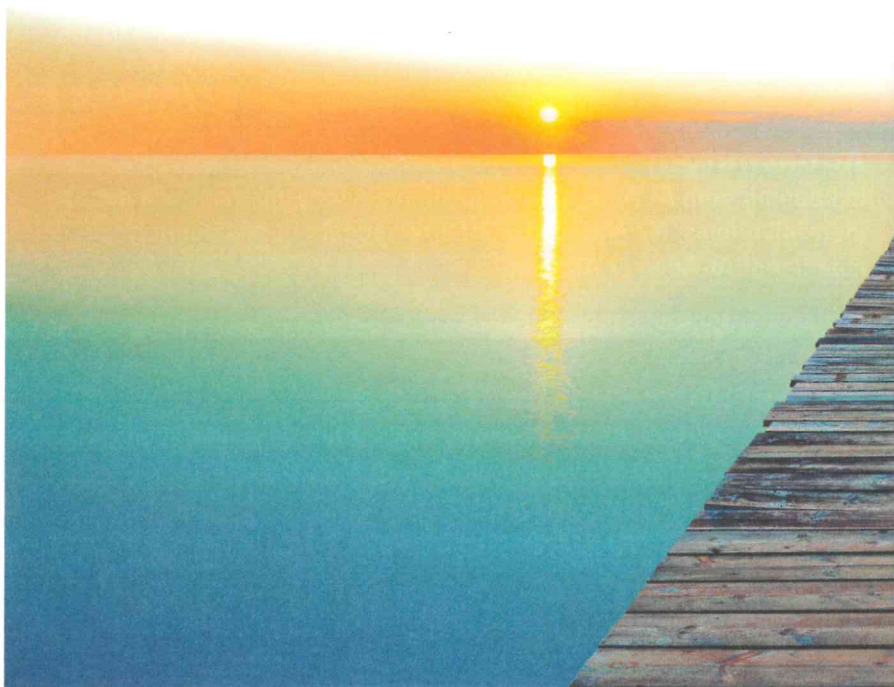
Al-Anon Provides a New Freedom

By Jennifer Kent-Charpentier • Program Manager • Fresh Start Recovery Centre
Calgary, Alberta

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Not only does the alcoholic need help in addressing their challenges, struggles and illness, but the family also deserves the same opportunity. When the family and the alcoholic receive help through learning, love, and support, it enables everyone to move toward the solution, rather than continue to live in the circular nature of the problem.

Initially, family members talk to us about feeling frustrated, hopeless, and unsure about what to do next. Families who begin attending Al-Anon tell us that this program teaches them how to unhook from the disease. Al-Anon challenges them to see what role they have been playing in the life of the alcoholic. This new understanding changes the dynamics of the relationship that the family members have with themselves and their loved one.




One family member told us that by attending Al-Anon she was learning how to say “no” in a way that honored her and her loved one. The joy we saw on her face when she explained how she practiced setting healthy boundaries was life-changing for her. This was the same family member who told us just one month prior that she was ready to give up.

Al-Anon shows people that the disease of alcoholism is not their fault. Al-Anon meetings provide an environment where they feel heard and supported while coming to terms with how the disease has affected and continues to affect them.

We have heard many family members talk about a new freedom, which includes letting go of the responsibility for the outcomes of the disease and the need to control it. These family members experience forgiveness for themselves and their loved ones.

We strongly recommend Al-Anon because everyone deserves to find peace within themselves. Everyone deserves to make peace with an insidious disease that would have them think it is all their fault and leave them reeling in the question, “What could I have done differently?”

Today, we know it is not their fault. We know there is a solution and that it can be found in the support from others who once faced the same deceptive thinking. This support is available through Al-Anon and the many wonderful people who have found their own freedom.



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I Couldn't Leave My Wife

By John H., Texas

Growing up in a dysfunctional home, I knew chaos very well. I always felt there was something wrong, but I didn't know what or how to fix it.

When I was 20, I had my first son. At 25, I divorced and had two boys to raise. At 30, I married my second alcoholic. She was a good person, held a job, was very helpful raising my two children, and I loved her. The drinking became worse after the boys left home and I thought about divorce, but I couldn't leave my wife. By age 50, my life had become unmanageable and I had nowhere to turn. At 54, I must have had the right amount of anger, resentment and anxiety to know I needed help and had to do something about it—anything.

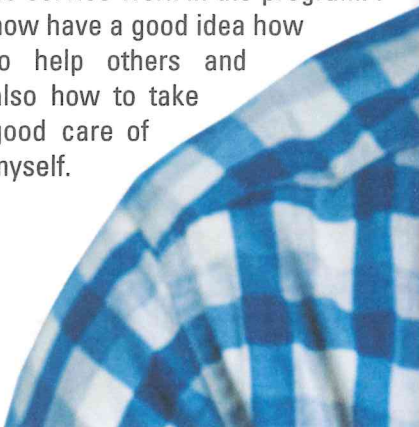
Through many visits to emergency rooms and rehabs, I heard about Al-Anon but always assumed my wife was the one with the problem, not me. But I did realize what I was doing was not working, so in January 2015 I went to my first Al-Anon meeting.

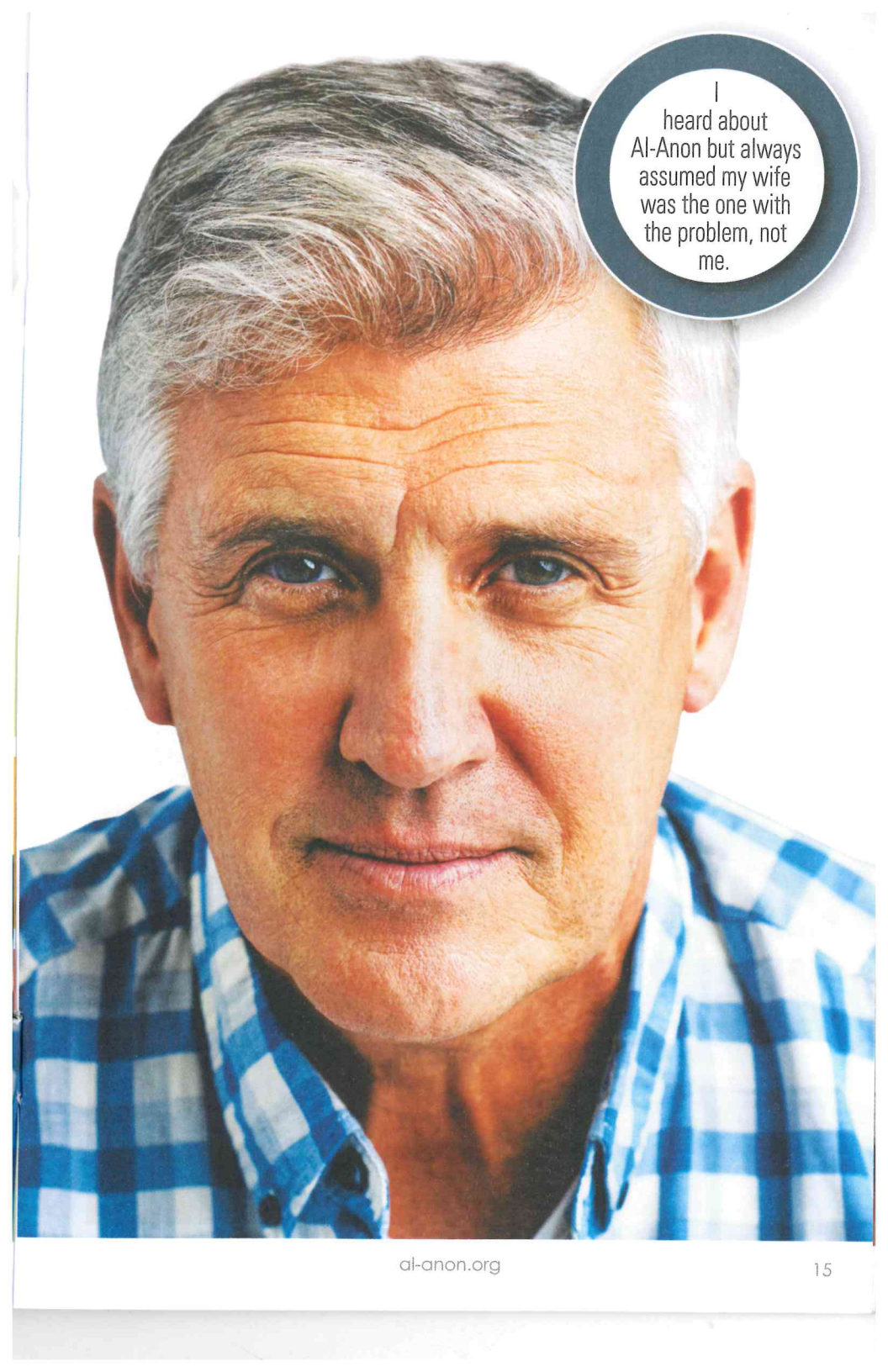
The people were kind and their stories sounded a lot like mine. The first thing I latched onto was a list called "The Do's and Don'ts." Immediately I knew I was doing almost all of the "don'ts" and none of the "do's." A member suggested

that I try to think about one "do," and one "don't" each week, so I printed the list and taped it to my wall. Soon I could catch myself before I did one of the "don'ts."

After my first Al-Anon meeting, I felt better about life and things did not seem so hopeless. I thought if one meeting was good, then two would be better. I also met a wise man in the program who directed me to an Al-Anon meeting that was especially for men. He told me he believed the program never really takes off until you go through the Twelve Steps.

My wife passed away from her disease about one year after I decided to get a Sponsor and started working Al-Anon's Twelve Steps. God's timing saved me from a life of "stinking thinking." I still attend Al-Anon and volunteer to do service work in the program. I now have a good idea how to help others and also how to take good care of myself.





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What “Anonymity” Is All About

Anonymity helps keep the emphasis on principles that can help solve personal problems, rather than on the personal situations that might be part of the problem. No one's social status, professional standing or level of education matters at an Al-Anon meeting. Confidentiality ensures that you can speak from the heart at an Al-Anon meeting, because everything said at the meeting stays at the meeting.

You don't have to worry that someone from the Al-Anon meeting will approach you in a public place and start discussing your personal, confidential problems.

Al-Anon And Alateen—Where You Can Find Help

Al-Anon is a mutual support program for people who have been affected by someone else's drinking.

Alateen meetings are for young people, usually teenagers, who have been affected by someone else's drinking. While Alateen members run their own meetings, adult group sponsors are there for safety and guidance. To ensure the safety of Alateen meetings, group sponsors must comply with Alateen safety and behavioral requirements.

Al-Anon Members Report Improved Well-Being

According to the most recent Al-Anon membership survey, 92 percent of Al-Anon members reported that their lives have been very positively affected by their membership in Al-Anon. Complete results from the most recent membership survey are available on the “Resources for Professionals” page of Al-Anon's website,

al-anon.org.

I Have Hope

By Lucia J., Czech Republic

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There is no Al-Anon meeting nearby in my country. In the past I visited face-to-face Al-Anon meetings in another city, where I learned Al-Anon can help me have a more manageable life. I didn't feel comfortable in those meetings, so I began participating in an Al-Anon meeting on Facebook. I found a sponsor and now I am working Al-Anon's Twelve Steps for the first time. It is very hard for me to deal with my husband's alcoholism. He drinks all time. I left him a few years ago, but then he started to attend A.A. meetings so I came back. We have a baby boy who is two years old.

My husband started drinking again six months after our son's birth. It was not so bad, not so often, but now it is escalating. I have worked really hard to keep the focus on myself, but I am not perfect. I feel so sad and angry. Without Al-Anon, I think I would feel worse.

Thanks to Al-Anon and the Twelve Steps I have hope that I will live a good and happy life again, whether my husband continues to drink or not. I also have hope that my husband will find his Higher Power as I have.



Al-Anon Is All About Change

By Eugene (J.R.) Lombardo, LCSW • Counseling and Psychotherapy
White Plains, N.Y.

I can tell right away when I am in the presence of a family dealing with alcoholism, because of the anxious tone in the room. Addiction is not logical; it is not linear, and it is not personal. I know how hard it is for families to hear this, because to them it is absolutely personal. Alcoholism affects them very deeply on an emotional, physical and spiritual level.

Therefore, responding in a reactive manner and using logic and persuasion on an issue such as this can be quite frustrating—even maddening. I know that I can be helpful as a professional, and I have spent my career attempting to do so. However, what Al-Anon offers is something quite different.

Nothing substitutes for experience, and in the rooms of Al-Anon I know my clients will get the wonderful, warm sense of peace and understanding that comes from being with people who know. Within each Al-Anon room is the shared experience of everyone who

is present or has passed through. And that group is part of a larger tradition—more than 65 years old and growing. “You are not alone” does not begin to touch this.

In addition to providing a safe, nonjudgmental environment, Al-Anon operates within a gentle structure that oftentimes serves as a safe haven for families who have lots of upheaval and turmoil. Meetings take



place where they are scheduled and start and end on time. Steps and Traditions are in place and literature is available that is Al-Anon approved. This can be a great weight lifted for the weary soul who enters,

because the structure provides safety and consistency. This leaves space for the work of change. Al-Anon is all about change. Finally, there is a safe space for the loved ones. It's all about them, and in Al-Anon, this is how it is supposed to be.

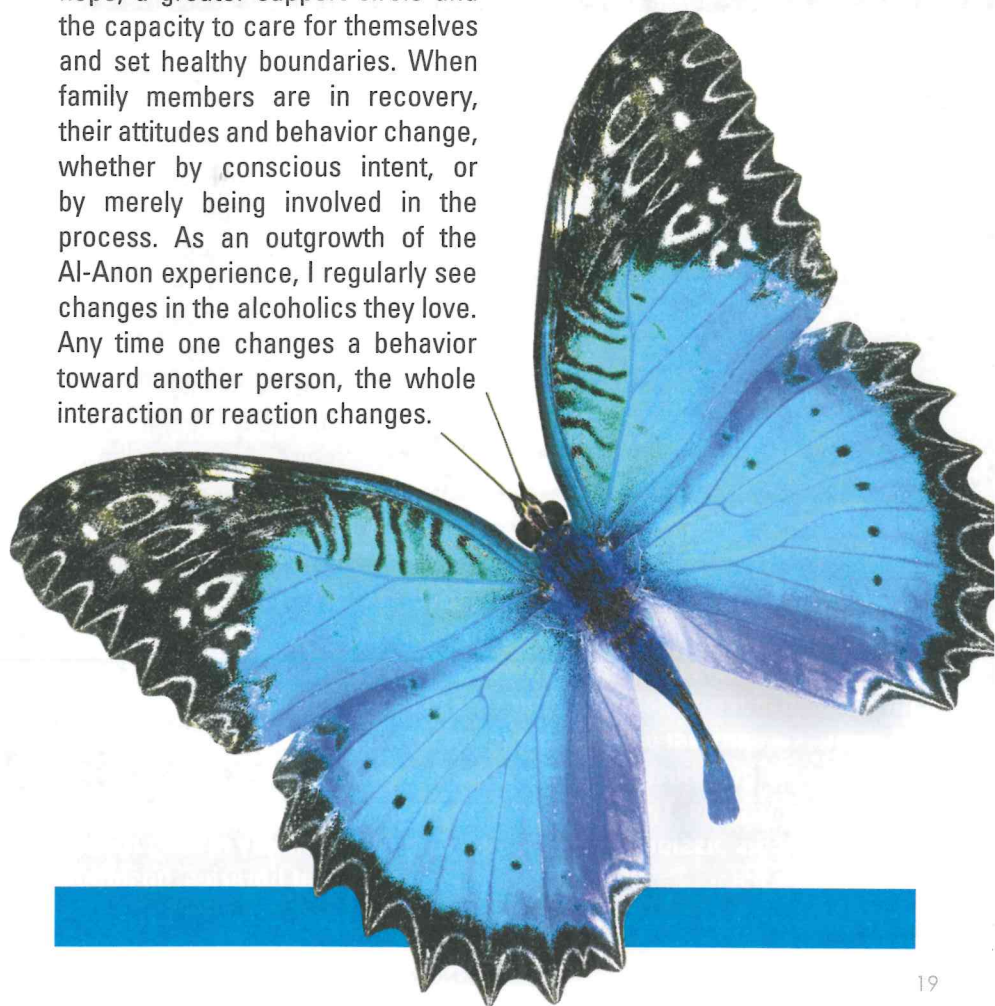
Developing the capacity for greater self-care, the ability to put supports in place and the idea of a

relationship with something greater than oneself are important parts of Al-Anon. Family members' lives become very small over time. This is an unfortunate byproduct of the physical and emotional time and energy it takes to survive. Sadly, survival, the most basic of instincts, is at times the most that alcoholics and their families can hope for.

Attending Al-Anon has given my clients a rejuvenated sense of hope, a greater support circle and the capacity to care for themselves and set healthy boundaries. When family members are in recovery, their attitudes and behavior change, whether by conscious intent, or by merely being involved in the process. As an outgrowth of the Al-Anon experience, I regularly see changes in the alcoholics they love. Any time one changes a behavior toward another person, the whole interaction or reaction changes.

As a professional clinician, I am constantly awestruck by the powerful transformation people experience in the rooms of Al-Anon. No longer mired purely in the problem, they are solution-focused and empowered in a way that can feel very freeing.

I always feel confident when I recommend Al-Anon, and I will continue to do so in the future.



Explaining the Disease to a Young Child

"We may not want to think that our children know what is going on, but they often do know something is terribly wrong. Children have an amazing capacity for dealing with the truth. Shrouding the illness in mystery and lies is far more frightening than a down-to-earth talk about the disease of alcoholism.

"In explaining the disease to young children, it is helpful to compare it to a chronic illness that they know. We can point out that the alcoholic is sick and doesn't mean all the things said while drinking. We should be careful to explain to our children that they are in no way responsible for the drinking and remind them that they are loved." From the Al-Anon pamphlet, *How Can I Help My Children?*

What Is the Difference between "Open" and "Closed" Meetings?

Anyone troubled by someone else's drinking is welcome to attend any Al-Anon meeting, whether it is listed as "open" or "closed" in a local meeting schedule.

An "open" meeting, however, also welcomes guests, students and interested professionals who want to learn by observing an Al-Anon meeting.

Observers attending open Al-Anon meetings are requested to abide by the principles that guide participation in all Al-Anon Family Group meetings, especially the principles of confidentiality and anonymity that protect the friends and families of alcoholics.

If the Al-Anon Meeting Is Held at a Church...

Al-Anon meetings include people of different religious affiliations, as well as individuals without any spiritual beliefs.

An Al-Anon meeting held in a church is not affiliated with that church. Al-Anon is a spiritual program but is not religious or affiliated with any church or religion, just as it is not affiliated with any other private or public organization. The location of the meeting place is irrelevant to the content and discussion at the meeting. Groups are simply renting rooms to hold their meetings. Many Al-Anon groups meet at libraries, hospitals or other facilities.

I Couldn't Find the Magic Solution To Fix My Mom

By Leah G., Washington

I came to Al-Anon for the first time because I felt hopeless. I had tried every possible thing to fix my alcoholic mother but none of it worked. Every night was a different fight that ended in the same exact defeat as the one before. It took me reaching rock bottom, the utmost feeling of hopelessness, to bring me into Al-Anon.

Once I got here, I realized where I went wrong—I couldn't find the magic solution to fix my mom because there wasn't one. Instead, I learned I had my own recovery and my own path of solutions to find for myself. This knowledge encouraged me to come back to Al-Anon, and since then I have gotten involved in my group and have never felt more at home. Meeting people with situations just as hopeless as mine and sharing stories of recovery with them constantly gives me hope, when it seemed there was none.



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Al-Anon Recovery Podcasts Are Available 24/7

Al-Anon recovery podcasts on Al-Anon's website, al-anon.org, offer professionals' as well as members' perspectives on family recovery and the benefits of Al-Anon Family Groups. Here's what one member of Al-Anon had to say about the podcast titled, "Connections between families, the Association for Addiction Professionals and Al-Anon Family Groups:"

"As I listened to this interview, I thought about how great it would have been if the professionals I sought help from had referred me to Al-Anon. The doctor could only recommend antidepressants. A marriage counselor told me the term 'alcoholic' had bad connotations and that I needed to accept my husband's decision to continue drinking. A psychiatrist told me that my husband had deviant behavior. My father referred to my husband as a 'sociopath.'

"I'm glad I trusted my instincts to go to Al-Anon. I could really relate to the loneliness described in this interview. I thought it would never pass.

"This interview explains very clearly how important it is for family members to recover and for the family dynamics to change—not just to help the alcoholic stay sober, but for the family members' well-being.

"I liked hearing how family members are empowered by Al-Anon and can 'pass it (recovery) forward' to other members still struggling with a loved one's drinking, or even when the alcoholic attains sobriety.

"I felt encouraged by this interview, that more therapists and counselors are aware of the importance of family recovery and Al-Anon. I felt hope for future generations."

The Drinking Was a Horrible Secret

By Tammie McL., Michigan

When a diagnosis confirmed that my father was an alcoholic, he went away to a treatment facility and we, the family members, my mother, sister and I, received an invitation to try local Al-Anon meetings.

When we walked into our first Al-Anon meeting, sat down, and listened to the Twelve Steps, a peace and calm came over me. Right away, I knew that these meetings and this program were where I needed to be. I went to as many meetings as I could, even though I did not speak for many weeks.

I felt so emotional that I cried, shook and my stomach stayed upset. I had never heard people talk about the alcoholic situation in their homes before, or the feelings that they had experienced.

When I was growing up, I always felt the drinking was a horrible secret that I had to keep. As a child, I had felt frightened, confused and embarrassed by the things that went on in my home.

It was such a relief through Al-Anon to recognize these feelings for what they were and to work through them after hearing others with similar circumstances share so openly. I feel like I will keep coming back to Al-Anon forever!

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Maybe I Was Not Alone

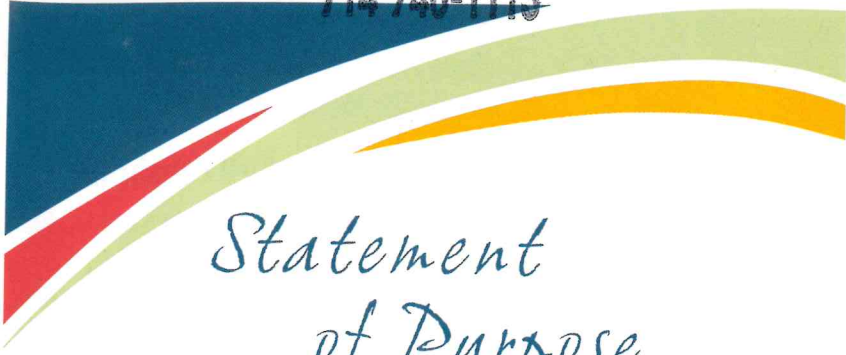
By Anonymous

I felt lonely, isolated and trapped. I had thoughts going around in my head that nobody could possibly understand. I felt depressed and in a state of panic at the same time. I really needed support.

In the previous ten years I went through an overload of family secrets that affected every member of my family. Overwhelmed with decisions that I needed to make, I sought out counseling, but I needed something more.

Fortunately, I felt drawn to Al-Anon. I went to a meeting terrified, where I sat, listened and cried. I cried in hope—because these people had stories that sounded a lot like mine. I cried because maybe, just maybe I was not alone. Maybe in Al-Anon I could have a voice and a safe place to speak.

"Just keep coming back," they said! I have kept coming back for six months now. I'm still new to it all—but I plan on continuing with Al-Anon.



Statement of Purpose

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism includes articles by Al-Anon members and professionals who share their personal perspective on how Al-Anon Family Groups can help people troubled by someone else's drinking.

Al-Anon cooperates with therapists, counselors and other professionals, but does not affiliate with or endorse any organization or professional. Articles written by Al-Anon members do not speak for Al-Anon as a whole but reflect only their personal experience with Al-Anon Family Groups.

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**What can
you
do, when
someone close
to you
drinks too
much?**

**You might be
surprised
at what you
can learn
in an Al-Anon
meeting.**

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Al-Anon Family Groups
Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics